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LIFE

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# West Hartford LIFE

**January 2017**

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“Bad dogs are few and far between; 99 percent of the time it’s the owner because we don’t want to take the time to learn how to communicate with the dog in the language the dog understands.”

—Diane Connelly

See story page 13

## ON THE COVER

“Winter Rose Garden” is this year’s West Hartford LIFE selection to wish our readers Happy Holidays. It was taken earlier this year in Elizabeth Park by Lisa Kim of Stone Kim Photography LLC.

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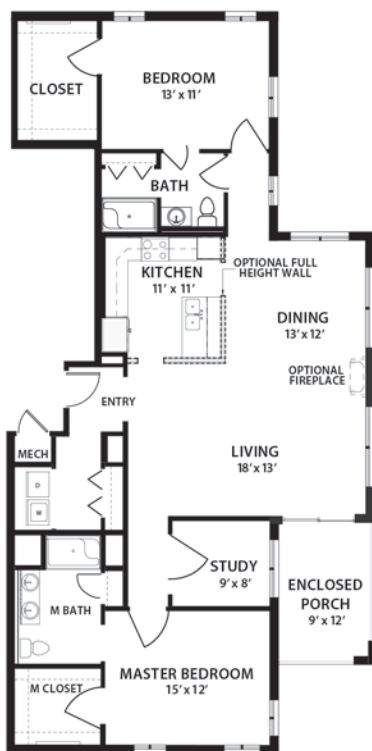
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# Alumni LIFE

## Conard grad carries on the tradition of Sephardic music

by Lynn Woike  
Editor



Vocalist and guitarist Susan Gaeta is one of a new generation of musicians who are exploring the rich and varied traditions of Sephardic music.

Courtesy photo

The torch is being passed to Susan Gaeta to keep the rich and varied culture of Sephardic music alive. She is honored to carry on the traditions taught to her by Flory Jagoda, known worldwide as the Keeper of the Flame for Sephardic music.

The traditional songs encompass ballads, romances and wedding songs passed down orally, sung originally in various Iberian languages – including Castilian, Catalan and Galician – as well as Hebrew, by Sephardic Jews with roots in Spain. Sefarad is the Hebrew term for the Iberian Peninsula.

Spanish Jews had a presence there dating back to 79 A.D., flourishing from the 700s on. With the rise of Catholic supremacy and the Spanish Inquisition, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella issued an Edict of Expulsion in 1492, giving hundreds of thousands of Jews four months to leave the country.

They fled to North Africa, the Middle East and Southeastern Europe, taking their language and their religion with them. The melodies, rhythms and languages found in their new countries made their way into the Ladino music they brought with them. What survived the centuries can be credited primarily to Jewish women. Gaeta is now one of them.

“I grew up in Hartford until I was in seventh grade, then moved to West Hartford,” attending King Philip Middle School and then Conard High School, she said.

Around the time she was 10, she began attending the YWCA’s Camp Aya-Po in Somers.

“Every summer I went there through the end of my sophomore year in college. ... I was a camper

all summer, or a counselor.”

It was at the camp she began playing the guitar, performing in end-of-the-summer concerts there.

She studied guitar, taking some classes at the University of Hartford’s Hartt School, but, she said, “A great deal of what I learned was by ear.”

Describing her musical family, Gaeta said, “Both of my paternal great-grandfathers were cantors. My mother sang in the Beth El Temple choir for years. My younger brother, George Feltman, traveled to Europe with the Hall High Jazz Band, plays trombone and sings. He has been the leader of the band, Atlas, in upstate New York for over 30 years. My sister, Joanne Feltman, has studied and performed classical voice. My older brother, Steven Feltman, enjoys singing jazz. My father has a great voice.”

Her grandfather played clarinet in a Klezmer band and acted in Yiddish theater productions.

“It’s in the genes,” she said.

Gaeta played in a few coffee-houses during high school. She also sang. Folk and classic rock were her favorite types of music.

“I was very involved in the choir at Conard, which was an amazing musical program at the time,” she said. Praising its director, William Lauer, she said the program “really influenced me a lot.” She was named to the Connecticut All-State and Eastern Seaboard choirs, the latter earning her a three-day trip to Atlantic City for a musical program.

At Ohio University, she majored in education.

Gaeta spent eight years in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where she studied classical guitar and performed Argentine folk music and jazz.

In 1988 she returned to the States to be closer to family,



settling in Virginia. While teaching guitar there, one of her students changed the direction of her life: Jagoda's daughter, Lori.

"She'd grown up singing and playing with her mother," Gaeta said. "She started to tell me about this music her mother composes and sings. ... She started teaching me the music."

The two formed a trio with Betsy Cary, called Colors of the Flame. Gaeta's second trio was with Flory Jagoda and Howard Bass, who plays guitar and lute.

Bass had been introduced to Sephardic music in the mid-1980s with the Boston-based group Voice of the Turtle. He met Jagoda, then Gaeta. They played together for years.

Bass called it "a rare opportunity" to perform music passed down through someone's ancestry.

In 2002, Jagoda was named a National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellow, the highest award given to artists and arts patrons by the United States government and awarded by the president. That same year, she selected Gaeta to

become a master apprentice through a program at The Virginia Foundation for the Humanities.

Gaeta said the master-apprentice relationship deepened her understanding of this unique music and strengthened her desire to preserve it for future generations.

In an interview published by the National Heritage Fellowships, Jagoda describes the music as "folk songs about daily life – nursery rhymes, romantic songs, love songs, wedding songs, dance songs and holiday songs. ... I started writing songs just to remember the life in my little mountain village. ... Some people write books to remember. I write songs to remember."

It's essential that the story that goes with the music is told to a new generation, Gaeta said.

"I think it's very important for me to keep the story of her family alive. ... Not a lot of people are familiar or aware of Sephardic culture. It's a way of teaching and presenting the story and the music."

Gaeta received a grant from the Virginia Foundation for the



Courtesy photo

**Trio Sefardi's first public performance was at the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage in 2010. The group has also performed at the Washington Folk Festival, the Takoma Park Folk Festival, the National Gallery of Art and many smaller venues. Members are Howard Bass, Susan Gaeta and Tina Chancey.**

Humanities to record a CD to preserve and continue Jagoda's music from her perspective as an apprentice. The 2005 recording traces the evolution of the authentic a cappella women's Sephardic vocal tradition that Jagoda learned from her grandmother, to

Gaeta's interpretation of the composer's more contemporary pieces.

It's titled "From Her Nona's Drawer" because Jagoda's nona had a drawer in her kitchen where she kept the songs she sang with other women from the village.

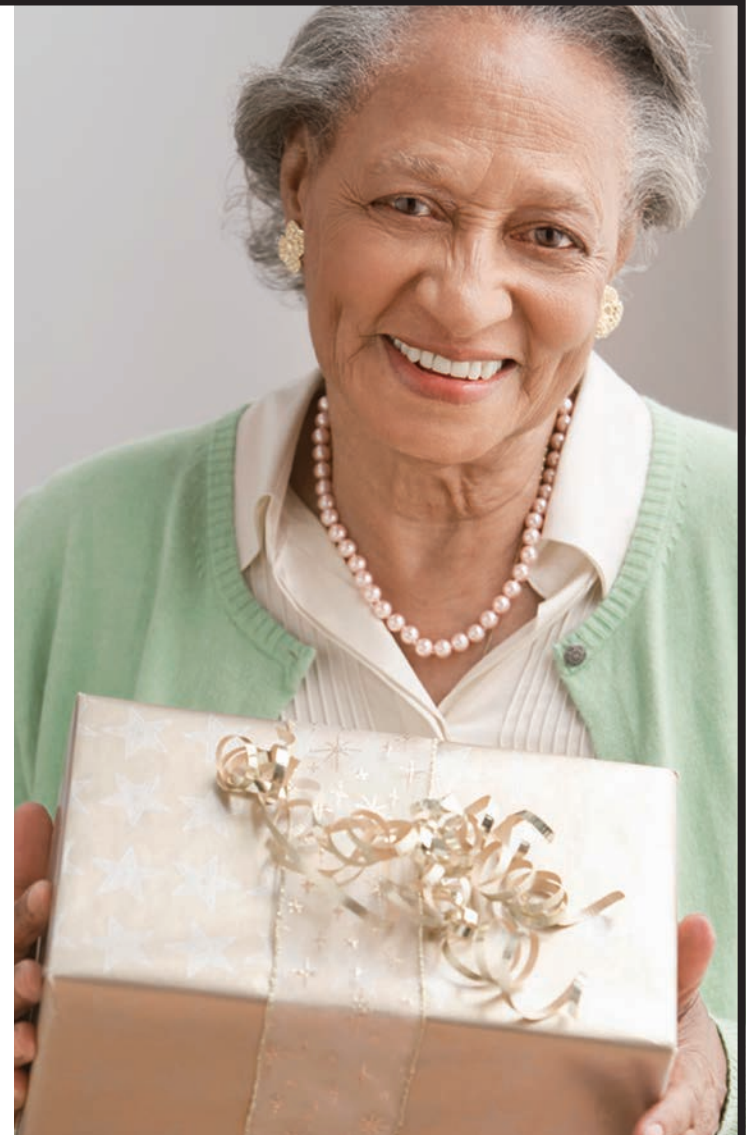
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Gaeta's present group, Trio Sefardi, formed in 2010 and does just that. She and Bass are joined by Tina Chancey who sings and plays a variety of medieval instruments including the viol, rebec, kamenj and lute. They are family; they call Jagoda nona.

"I just love the rhythms of that music, the sound of it," Gaeta said, calling it "a Mediterranean sound" and "very Balkan." It serves as an oral history of Sephardic Jews.

"Kaminos," Gaeta's latest CD, was released in late 2016. On it, Trio Sefardi performs 17 songs, four of them instrumental, from around the world. There are songs about places, God, drinking, relatives and love. "Sephardic Celebration," also with Trio Sefardi, was released in 2014.

Gaeta has traveled with Jagoda, to her birthplace of Sarajevo, Bosnia and to the mountain village of Vlasenica, where Jagoda's mother's family had lived, and where she learned songs from her nona (Ladino for grandmother), who also taught her about her heritage and how to speak the Judaeo-Spanish language Ladino.

When the Nazis began slaughtering Jews in 1933, Jagoda and her parents were among the few managing to escape being taken to the countryside, killed and buried in a mass grave.

Forty-two members of her family died. Jagoda and her parents made their way to what is now Croatia, then to Korcula, an island in the Adriatic Sea under Italian control; there they were interned. In the final months of the war, her father gave the 17-year-old a forged train ticket with a non-Jewish name and she boarded the train alone, remembering her father's words to not speak and to just play her



Susan Gaeta sings songs taught to her by Flory Jagoda, keeping the tradition of Sephardic music alive.

accordion. She credits that accordion for keeping her alive. She ended up in an area of the Italian coast that was occupied by the American Army. There, she met Harry Jagoda, a staff sergeant from Ohio. They married in Italy and later settled in Virginia where they raised four children. Her parents and an uncle were the only other survivors of the Altarac family.

After bearing witness to Jagoda's life story and retracing history, including visiting the mass grave in a ravine where Jagoda placed a headstone, Gaeta said she "feels the responsibility to continue to tell the story."

She has performed Sephardic music at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., the Holocaust Museum and the Askenazi Festival in Toronto, Canada.

"She's a wonderful performer, someone who can really tell a story through song. She's got a beautiful voice," Bass said of Gaeta.

Endorsing the trio, Jagoda stated, "It gives me the greatest pleasure to hear Trio Sefardi play the music that I taught them and

In 2013, JEMGLO, an award-winning documentary organization, made a one-hour documentary about Jagoda, weaving her narrative of her life and commentary from others with selections from her celebration concert at the U.S. Library of Congress. There, she was joined onstage by 25 musicians with whom she has performed over the years, including Gaeta.

"Flory's Flame" had its Connecticut debut December 3 at the University of Hartford's Wilde

## "I just love the rhythms of that music, the sound of it."

—Susan Gaeta

to know that the cherished musical culture and traditions of the Bosnian Sephardim will continue to thrill listeners well into the future. Trio Sefardi's beautiful harmonies and skilled accompaniment movingly translates the joy and soul of the lost world I remember so well. Along with my own family, I am proud to call them my musical heirs."

Jazz is Gaeta's other love; she has a jazz duo, and sings and performs as a soloist, too.

A generous donation from Gaeta helped establish the Flory Jagoda Sephardic Music Fund through the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. The fund shares and supports Sephardic music and culture through the arts, performance and study.

Auditorium. It was followed by a concert of Sephardic music by Gaeta and Bass. The special event was presented by The Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Hartford and by Congregation Beth Ahm, a Modern Conservative synagogue in Windsor. A dessert reception after the concert was sponsored by the Hoffman Auto Group and Gaeta's family, the Feltmans.

Gaeta has become a cultural guardian; in 2018, Jagoda's protégée will take on an apprentice of her own to help keep the ancient songs alive. **WHL**

For more information, visit these websites: [susangaeta.com](http://susangaeta.com), [triosefardi.com](http://triosefardi.com) and [florysflamemovie.com](http://florysflamemovie.com).



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The Church Of Saint Helena, which just celebrated its 50th anniversary, currently shares a pastor with the Church of Saint Brigid.



The Church of Saint Brigid was the first Catholic church in West Hartford, built in 1919 to care for 150 Catholics.

Photos by Lynn Woike

# Changing with the times

Pastoral planning will position Catholic community for the next 50 years

by Lynn Woike  
Editor

Fifty years ago, two new Catholic churches opened in town. Chances are good that next year, one or more of the six in town will be slated to close. Geographical distances, aging buildings, attendance, economics, how many times each sacrament is celebrated and the number of retiring priests are among the factors that will come into play as decisions are made.

The Archdiocese of Hartford – which includes Hartford, Litchfield and New Haven counties – is undergoing pastoral planning in response to Pope Francis' call to "review and renew our parishes."

"It takes a lot of time, a lot of input," said Fr. James Shanley, vicar of pastoral planning for the archdiocese, noting that pastoral planning is an aspect of discipleship, and thus no one is exempt.

Each parish is involved in analysis, evaluating its facilities,



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Ground was broken for the Church of Saint Timothy and school in 1959 and the first Mass was celebrated in the church in June 1960.



Saint Mark the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church on South Quaker Lane is one of six Catholic churches in town.

Photos by Lynn Wolke

programs and circumstances, including schools and cemeteries.

Campus ministries, including those at the University of Hartford and Trinity College, are also being evaluated, he said. Because priests often find their vocation in college, "we want to have a strong campus ministry."

Clergy, staff and parishioners have all been involved. Based on

the data collected, a 26-member pastoral planning committee, working with the consulting firm PartnersEdge LLC/ Teamworks International Inc., will offer ways to position the archdiocese to best meet the needs and challenges. In the coming year, the Office of Pastoral Planning will assume the lead role in developing, communicating and implementing

a strategic pastoral plan for the restructuring of the archdiocese.

"We need to reposition ourselves to be sure we have the right number of parishes ... based on the number of priests we have ... to go forward," Shanley said.

"People don't like change ... especially in Connecticut and New England," he said.

Yet change is necessary to

ensure vibrant parishes that continue to serve God.

"We want to make sure we're in the right spot for the next 50 years," Shanley said. "We don't want it to be all about maintenance, we want it to be about mission."

Churches represent buildings, and for the most part, the parishes they house are all stand-alone entities.



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When people flocked to cities like Hartford, New Haven and Waterbury, they built huge churches, Shanley said. There were Polish churches, Italian churches, Irish churches and German churches. Some of these churches were within walking distance of the parishioners and sometimes within sight of one another.

Now many of those parishioners have moved to the suburbs and it's difficult to keep the old, large buildings in good repair. Some don't have parking lots. Some are not handicap accessible. Some are not energy efficient.

There are a significant number of parishes that currently cannot or will not be able to sustain themselves financially in the near future, he said.

In addition, he explained, there is no longer an abundance of priests. For 40 years – here and across the country – the total number of active priests has continued to decline while the total number of parishes has not diminished proportionately. This has resulted in a great number of understaffed parishes, overworked pastors, and young, inexperienced priests being called on to serve as pastors.

Currently there are 186 priests in the archdiocese, but by this time next year, only 162 will be younger than the retirement age of 75. Ten years from now, that number will be down to 104, Shanley said.

Restructuring is necessary to be effective and make the best use of resources to meet the greater good, he said.

"We can't sustain everything exactly as it is."

St. Brigid's was the first Catholic church in West Hartford, built in 1919 to care for 150 Catholics. St. Thomas the Apostle was founded the next year. In less than 50 years, the number of Catholic churches was at six, where it still is today.

"All parishes share the same faith," Shanley said, and people attend the church that meets their spiritual needs. No longer is a church populated with only residents from that town.

Some changes have already begun to happen.

Where once the pastor at Saint Timothy's worked for the parish full time, now he works part time for the parish and part time as the chancellor of the Archdiocese of Hartford.

When the Church of St. Helena was formed 50 years ago, some of the parishioners came from the Church of Saint Brigid. Since 2009, one pastor has served both parishes and the school, while each remains completely independent. It was the only one of three groupings planned at the time that was implemented.

"That model is not working out as well as we hoped," Shanley said of one priest commuting between two churches.

He believes combining one or more parishes into a single parish "is a much, much better model."

If that is determined to be the best model, the archdiocese will decide which parishes would be combined under a common pastor, but then it would be up to those parishes to implement the details.

"It's going to mean change," Shanley said.

They could keep all the buildings, convert one into elderly housing or a youth center, sell a church and use the money for something else, or close them all and build a new church.

The clergy, religious, parish staffs and councils, finance committees, trustees and parishioners will be responsible for the creation, implementation and monitoring of progress for their particular pastoral plan in a given parish.

Fr. William Metzler, pastor of The Catholic Church of St. Mark the Evangelist, said, "I think that the people of this parish are prepared for the fact there's going to be changes. What those changes are, we don't know yet."

Since becoming pastor three years ago, he said he has told parishioners that "changes have to come. There's been a changing demographic in West Hartford and there's a changing Catholic demographic. The churches we needed 50 years ago are not what we need now. We've got these





**Fifty years ago, the Church of Saint Peter Claver was formed from the growing Catholic population within St. Thomas the Apostle Parish.**

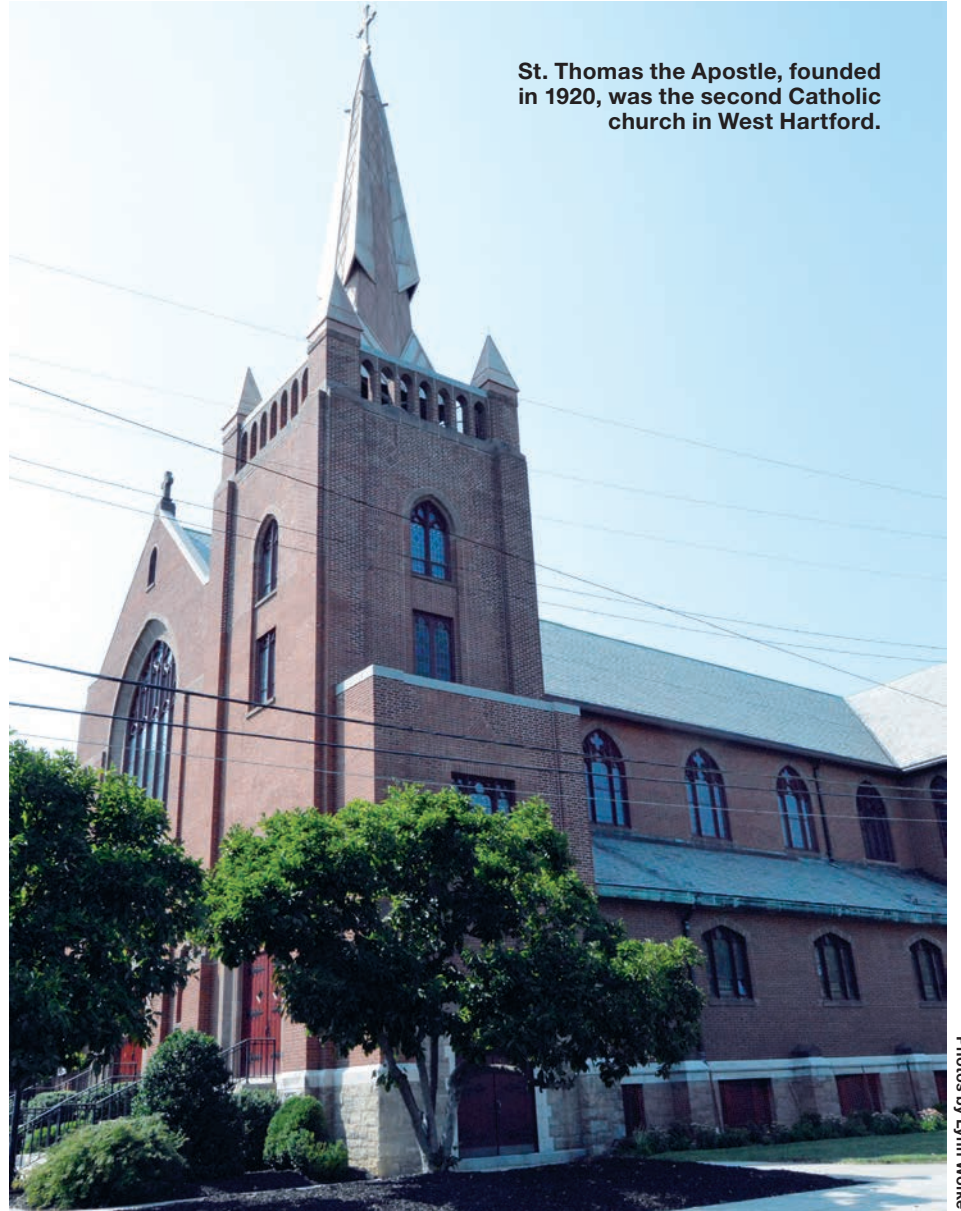
beautiful, big churches in the center cities where we don't have people anymore."

Between 2003 and 2013, the number of births in the Archdiocese of Hartford declined 15 percent – from roughly 19,000 to 17,500 – according to the Environmental Systems Research Institute. Hartford County declined 12.5 percent. In addition, census data shows that for the past five years, more people have moved out of the state than have moved into it; its outward

migration is among the 10 highest rates nationwide.

There are also not enough priests to staff all the churches, Metzler said, noting that 20 years ago, there were approximately 19 priests residing in West Hartford; now he counts seven. St. Mark's, for many years, had two priests, while Saint Thomas the Apostle had four; now each has one.

He complimented the archdiocese for looking at the situation "very creatively and very constructively." Still, he said,



**St. Thomas the Apostle, founded in 1920, was the second Catholic church in West Hartford.**

Photos by Lynn Woike

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“without a doubt, not everyone is going to be happy. ... There will be fewer churches in West Hartford 10 years from now,” but how many is still to be determined.

“Right now, the process is the most important,” Shanley said.

The goal is to make each archdiocesan entity effective, accountable and self-sustaining in terms of finance, operations and organizational structures.

Some parishes have already begun to meet and find ways to do more things together, Shanley said.

Saint Brigid School, which was once in danger of closing, is now thriving because it partnered with Saint Augustine School in Hartford, which closed at the end of the last school year. Then, two weeks before it was to open in August, Saint Mary School in Newington made the decision to close, recommending its 109 students enroll at St. Brigid-St. Augustine Partnership School located three miles away.

## “There’s been a changing demographic in West Hartford and there’s a changing Catholic demographic. The churches we needed 50 years ago are not what we need now.”

—Fr. William Metzler

Many did.

Shanley used the example of Hartford’s St. Patrick-St. Anthony Church. They were once two separate parishes. In 1957, with St. Patrick’s losing parishioners to the suburbs and St. Anthony losing its building to urban renewal and Constitution Plaza, the archbishop proposed the two faith communities merge. Now it is thriving, Shanley said.

He recalled that 50 years ago, in 1966, he was in the sixth grade at St. Thomas the Apostle School when the parish was divided to create the Church of St. Peter Claver. That was a period of growth as many new families with children moved to

town, and there were many priests.

“It was almost impossible to get into St. Thomas the Apostle School,” he said, noting all the students were from West Hartford and there was a waiting list to attend. That is no longer the case.

His family stayed at St. Thomas, but he remembers the surprise.

“Everybody thought they would never be able to make this change,” he said.

Now, rather than starting parishes, parishes will be consolidated. However, it’s not about closing churches or schools, it’s about revitalization and forming stronger spiritual communities.

“We want to bring people

together. ... We’re doing this in order to be stronger,” Shanley said.

As the restructuring gets underway, he said the archdiocese will increase its evangelical work to draw people back and to recruit more priests.

Before undertaking this work, the archdiocese assessed itself, resulting in a reorganization of its central office. New positions and departments were created and some offices were closed. There were some retirements and a few layoffs, with work transitioned to other areas. Outreach will support all language and ethnic groups in the Archdiocese, including but not limited to, Hispanic/Latino, African American, Portuguese, Korean, Karen (Myanmar), Brazilian, Vietnamese, Caribbean islands, the recent immigrants from Ghana, Nigeria and other countries of Africa, Polish and persons of the Syro-Malabar rite from India. The Apostolate of the Deaf and the Disabled Community is also being strengthened. **WHL**



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# Teaching dogs new tricks

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Hartford Obedience Training Club  
celebrates 80 years of training

After seeing two women demonstrate dog obedience learned in England, a local group was so impressed, it met at the Hotel Garde in Hartford in 1937 and decided it was time to bring the training to Connecticut.

The Hartford Obedience Training Club formed that spring as an offshoot of the Nutmeg Dog Club. Raymond Dower was its first president.

"We are the oldest training club in continual existence in the country," said Diane Connelly, the club's registration director and secretary.

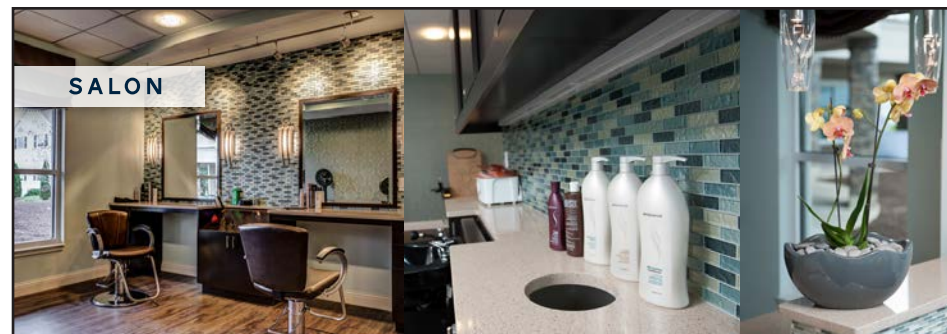
As the club marks its 80th year, Connelly is celebrating her 40th year as a member. She has also served as the club's president, assistant to the training director,

beginner class instructor and a board member.

That first summer, members trained in Hartford's Keney Park, moving to the old unheated Car Barn on State Street when the snows came.

"On really bitter evenings, they met in the hall over Myers Bar and Grill, and rumor has it, that when it got too cold upstairs, they would go downstairs and warm up," according to a history provided by the club. "So they trained under all conditions in the early days, even using two chairs and a broomstick for a jump when they had to. The dogs were put through their paces with a real lion in attendance one night, when MGM was filming in the area and used the Car Barn for storage."

The club strived to learn more about obedience training methods, called on professionals for



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3. I will never be smarter than a 2-year-old child, but I am also not a child.
4. I want to please you.
5. I feel what you feel.
6. Your tone of voice affects me.
7. Rewards are more effective than fear of punishment when trying to control my behavior.
8. My memory is not the same as yours. If you scold me, I'll understand you're mad at me, but if it's for something I did hours ago, I'm not going to understand that's what you're mad about.
9. My bark can mean I'm scared, happy or angry.
10. I'm going to try to protect you.
11. I get confused if you change the rules or the boundaries.
12. I need exercise.
13. I get lonely; don't leave me alone all the time.
14. It's not good to feed me food from the table.

help and initiated the idea of running clinics to train people to train their dogs. If someone came to class without having practiced the homework, "you were told you were wasting your time and offered your money back," the history states.

The group's enthusiasm led to 35 other clubs starting in neighboring states.

Realizing the importance of demonstrations, Jack Baird and his boxer first performed at the Institute of Living. Return visits were followed by demonstrations for the Newington Home and Hospital for Crippled Children, Times Farm and Camp Courant.

The club's first obedience show in 1938 at the Hartford Armory drew 88 entries. It still participates in the First Company Governor's Foot Guard Dog Show, providing trophies and stewards for the obedience portion of the event that will have its 90th and 91st shows in February. Last year there were

2,200 entries between the two days.

"Anything new was an attraction, and the public accepted the sport of dog training with great zest. Their first match at Trinity Field realized a handsome profit for their favorite benefits, Camp Courant and the Times Farm," according to the club's history.

The obstacle course designed to challenge members and exhibitors at matches and picnics was the forerunner to what is commonly known today as agility events.

"Initially, we were part of the Nutmeg Dog Club, which was recognized by the American Kennel Club," Connelly said, but because the AKC only recognized purebred dogs, the local group broke away.

Since then, a number of clubs petitioned the AKC to allow mixed-breed dogs to compete, and it's now allowed in obedience events.

"The founding group felt all

dogs should be trained," she said, adding that it still does.

"They're members of the family," she said of dogs. "They are a part of our lives. Everyone should have a relatively well-behaved dog that they can take places with them."

Her own involvement with Hartford Obedience began with the eight-week beginner course and her desire "to have a well-behaved dog that would come when I called it." Not only did Jamie, her English springer spaniel, attain that goal, he became the first certified therapy dog in the state.

The first 35 years, competition was the primary focus of the club. Now it is a companion club, she said.

While Connelly did compete with Jamie, she soon gave that up, explaining, "He was the class clown. He was my first springer. I dearly loved that dog, but he marched to his own drummer. People laughed [at him] and he loved it, he was in his glory."

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Courtesy photos



Lorrie Moule, the club's training director, had her first encounter with the organization when she was the town's animal control officer, responding to a call for help when a ferret attempted to join a class.



Club President Jack Petersen got involved when he began training his Miniature Schnauzer 10 years ago.

For instance, she could never break him of his habit of retrieving the designated object, only to toss it in the air and catch it before returning it to her.

She credits trainer Hazel Fletcher for telling her to continue to work with him, but to forget about competing and just enjoy his antics, calling it the best advice she's ever received.

"I couldn't get myself upset because the title was never the important thing for me. What was important to me was the relationship I had with the dog. We just had a great time."

It's not uncommon for a member to have multiple dogs and to compete with them in all aspects, showing both in obedience and breed, nationally and internationally.

Lorrie Moule's German shepherds are top-rated in the country, and Jane Goodell has the top Tibetan terrier in rally in the country.

Kathy Mayer's dog, Kaydee, was the first Goldendoodle in the country to earn a trick champion title through Do More with Your Dog, and Mayer credits the club for providing the foundation during years of obedience training with Moule.

"One thing led to another," she said.

The club has had many

impressive accomplishments over the years, seemingly making it difficult to live by the club's motto, "Win without boasting."

Chief Herman Schendel – a founding member and later club president for 10 years as well as chief training director – is remembered for his "absolutely breathtaking" performances with Michael, a golden retriever, earning 15 perfect scores and another 13 missing perfection by only half a point.

This is remarkable, Connelly said, because he and his dog would have started the routine with 200 points and got through it all without either of them being so much as a fraction of an inch out of position during the entire exercise.

Schendel also had a precision drill team that performed around the country, including at Yankee Stadium and Madison Square Garden.

In 1944, at the First Dog Training Club of Northern New Jersey's Show, three Hartford dogs had a triple tie for the highest scoring dog with a perfect 200.

Dr. and Mrs. Harry Otis were the first in the country to earn performance titles with bull terriers, and the Robert Aninger family did the same with their Malamutes. In 1960, Judy Hansen Hull with her Labrador retriever, Squawky,

was the first member to win the coveted Dog World Award by earning their titles in three consecutive shows with scores of 195 or better.

Another first came in 1985 when the club introduced Canine Country Dancers doing several square dance routines, initially for an AARP presentation. The club called that a precursor to what is known today as freestyle or dancing with your dog.

In 2005, the group formed Paws for a Cause and participated in the Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation's fundraising walk. Encouraged by the success of that venture, some members gave demonstrations at the Eastern States Exposition, and members began participating in the Park Road Parade, which they still do. Paws for a Cause was named the most unique neighborhood group by the parade committee.

After the Car Barn, the club's training quarters moved to the smaller White Eagle Hall, the West Hartford Armory, the Polish National Home in Newington, Noah Webster School, a West Hartford fire house, West Middle School and the Good Shepherd Home. From 1954-1968, the club met at the American School for the Deaf before moving to Glastonbury Grange Hall and back to town,



Photo by Lynn Wolke



Brad Formaker gives Hana, a French poodle, a command at a recent class conducted by the Hartford Obedience Training Club.



Kathy Mayer's Goldendoodle, Kaydee, knows a variety of tricks. In addition to being a trick dog champion, she is also a certified therapy dog.

Photos by Pam Hastings



in the old Hall High School, where it remained for 14 years. Meetings then moved to Watkinson School in Hartford. Renovations there forced a move to the American Legion Hall in West Hartford in 1991. Blue Back Square's construction necessitated another move, and in 2006, the club

moved to its present location: Elmwood Community Church.

Having dogs makes it difficult to find places that will rent to you, said Connelly, who has been a member for three of the moves.

An awards banquet has been held each December since the 1940s,

and September marks the annual picnic that began in 1975. A Halloween party has been taking place every year since 1977. Other activities include a member appreciation day, brunches, a canine holiday party with Santa, visits to nursing homes and hospitals, and education-

al demonstrations that show the value of training.

"We're about giving you tools to teach your dog to behave," Connelly said. "Training is nothing but learning good manners. ... Bad dogs are few and far between; 99 percent of the time it's the owner because we

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## "Training is nothing but learning good manners."

—Diane Connelly

don't want to take the time to learn how to communicate with the dog in the language the dog understands. The dog understands body language. ... The dog needs to be shown what the word means."

On a recent Tuesday night, Moule, training director, choreographed moves for handlers and their dogs. Her first encounter with the organization was as the town's former animal control officer, responding to a call for help when a ferret attempted to join a class.

After five weeks, her group of beginners had the attention of their pets most all the time. The dogs sat, stayed, walked and lay down, always eager for a treat and some affection.

Dogs in the novice class were led through more advanced moves.

There is a camaraderie among members as each is dedicated to bonding with their dogs through training and communication.

Brad Formaker was there because he wanted a more well-behaved dog that he could take more places. His wife, Mary, worked with Hana for the beginner and sub-novice classes.

"It takes a lot of patience and con-

sistency, and treats," Brad Formaker said. "It's a never-ending process."

"She's smarter than we are,"

Mary Formaker said.

Ken Elterich was there with Cody. He joined the club 10 years ago, coming with a different dog then.

"You really have to do it the same way every time," he said of giving a command you want your dog to obey. "You have to be patient and consistent."

Most time, he said, "It's really not the dog that's making the mistake, it's the handler."

Once a dog is trained, you must continue to work with it the same way. Always. You can't slack off or the dog will, too, Elterich said.

The club holds a six-week beginner course, followed by a sub-novice class for dogs who are not reliable off leash. The novice classes are the advanced, preparing a dog for competition. There is an open class that incorporates the heeling exercises and retrieving skills, and special six-week courses focusing on a variety of skills such as focus, catching a ball and dancing. The club also holds a monthly Show N' Go night for rally, competition, open and utility.



Courtesy photo

Participating in the Park Road Parade is an annual event. Its group, Paws for a Cause, was named the most unique neighborhood group by the parade committee.

Club President Jack Petersen said he and his wife "got involved with Hartford Obedience Training Club close to 30 years ago when we obtained our first miniature schnauzer. We were just looking to have a dog that would come when called, and be a well-behaved canine citizen."

Over the years, they've trained six other dogs, all the while becoming "more and more involved with the club and the joys of a well-trained dog. Morgan, our 7-year-old Pomeranian, looks forward to her visits to Saint Mary Home in West Hartford, bringing a little joy to the residents she sees. Five years ago,

with the addition of our miniature bull terrier, Zoey, we were introduced to the world of dog shows and performance tests. We have since obtained Zoey's AKC Breed Championship, an AKC Junior Earthdog and Senior Earthdog title, a Barn Hunt Association Novice and Open Title, and an American Working Terrier Association Certificate of Gameness Title. All of these were possible with the help of some basic dog obedience training and having fun with our dogs," he said.

To mark its 80th anniversary, the club is planning a dinner May 20, 2017. **WHL**

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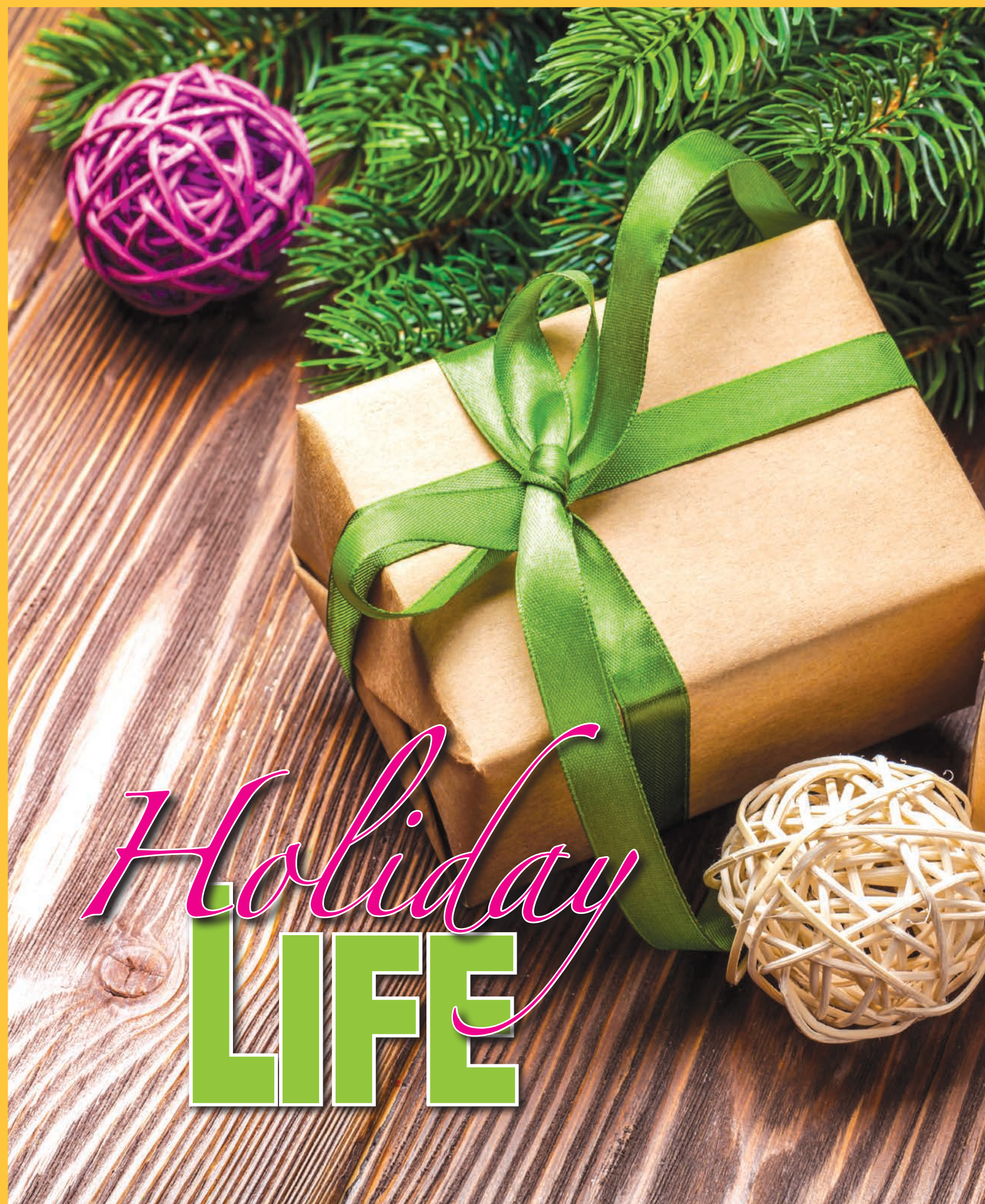
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# Dreaming Of A

# GREEN Christmas

Tips to make  
your holiday more  
environmentally friendly

by Lynn Woike  
Editor

**G**reen candles, green wreaths and green table runners don't necessarily add up to a green Christmas. The season tends to result in more garbage and more energy consumption, but with a bit of effort and planning, the environmental impact of the holiday season can be reduced.

"I like the idea of buying a real Christmas tree versus a fake one," said Margery Winters, assistant director at



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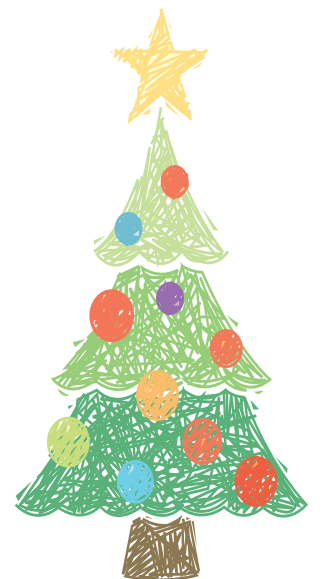
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## Holiday LIFE

the Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton, adding, "It smells better and it's more in keeping with the season."

Christy Page, assistant park naturalist at Westmoor Park in West Hartford also advocates for live trees, saying, "They are a renewable resource, and the Christmas tree farms provide bird and animal habitats throughout the years as the trees grow to useable size."

**"There's something special about giving your time."**

**– John Calandrelli**

LED lights are more energy efficient, which is more eco-friendly, Winters said.

She also suggested pruning other evergreens, including holly and ivy, to bring inside and use as decorations during the Christmas season.

To prevent any bugs from coming in with pine cones, she suggested putting them in a 150-degree oven for 30-60 minutes.

"Keep it simple," Winters said. "Use less plastic and more natural materials."

When the dropping needles signal it's time to take down the tree, Winters said she likes to dis-

mantle the tree with pruning shears and use the branches as mulch in her garden to keep the ground cold and the perennials from popping up prematurely if the temperature rises.

Every year, Kasha Breau, the lead teacher naturalist at Connecticut Audubon Society, Center at Glastonbury, puts her Christmas tree up outside instead of inside.

She decorates a small evergreen tied to a post with cold-weather ornaments for the birds, such as bagel slices covered with peanut butter and dipped in birdseed, and kabob-like decorations using fresh cranberries, pieces of apple, grapes and orange slices.

"You can use the green floral wire" to hold the food, forming a loop at the bottom so it does not fall off, and hanging it on a branch. When the fruit has been eaten, you can remove the wire, wipe it off, put on more food and rehang it, making your tree different every time. Slices of apple and oranges can also be hung with string or wire.

"It makes your tree a really friendly place," she said.



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## Holiday LIFE

It doesn't have to be an ever-green tree, Breau said, noting that bird-friendly ornaments can be hung from any tree, and lights can also be added.

"That way there's no mess of a tree in the house, no needles falling off. ... It's something a little bit different," she said.

"Instead of giving a lot of 'stuff' at Christmas," Peter McKnight, a member of the Connecticut Sierra Club who works in West Hartford, suggests "giving a donation to an eco-friendly organization or to a group you know the recipient supports."

Page echoed that suggestion.

"Donate to something good on behalf of someone – there are a lot of organizations that have ways to 'gift' someone by donating in their name. Find an organization that fits the passions of the person you are trying to buy for, and use the amount you would have spent on a physical gift to donate in their name instead," she said.

If it seems an envelope is not enough to open, McKnight advocated for adding "something small, useful and consumable that won't end up in a landfill," such as soap made at a local farm or a mini loaf of bread.



John Calandrelli, Connecticut Sierra Club's local program manager, avoids Black Friday "at all costs," calling it the most important step to having a greener Christmas.

Rather, he said, "Give of yourself" to family and friends. "There's something special about giving your

time: you don't know how much of it you have and once it's gone, you can't get it back.

"Promise them one back rub or take them to ride a horse or take them ice skating. Your time and caring are



more important than anything you can give them. If they like to open something on the holiday, you can wrap your giving in a box or envelope. Your gift will keep giving after the holiday craziness is long gone."

Page likes giving "adventures instead of gifts," such as certificates

for a shared experience such as camping, hiking, canoeing, or even going to see a movie together.

Cheri Collins, coordinator at the Wethersfield Nature Center, said, "One thing that people have been doing in recent years, that I like and have done as well, is instead of using paper, to buy some really nice fabric to wrap gifts in."

The fabric can be reused to wrap future gifts, or, if a dish towel or scarf were chosen, they can become usable gifts as well.

"I like to hand make gifts for people," she said.

In addition to handmade and home-baked items, she likes to give herbs and other plants to friends.

"Rosemary is easy to root," she noted.

For Doug Jackson, a park naturalist at Westmoor Park, a green Christmas is a part of green living. However you define it, 'green' is a more simple lifestyle that reduces "the amount of things we consume," he said.

"If you have been in the habit of making extensive light displays during the holiday season, then scale it down in size. ... For family travel plans, be intentional about how much driving you do during the holidays. ... Make your home as energy efficient as possible, in as many areas as possible: heating, lighting, etc.," Jackson said.

That way, eco-friendly efforts will extend into the new year. **WHL**

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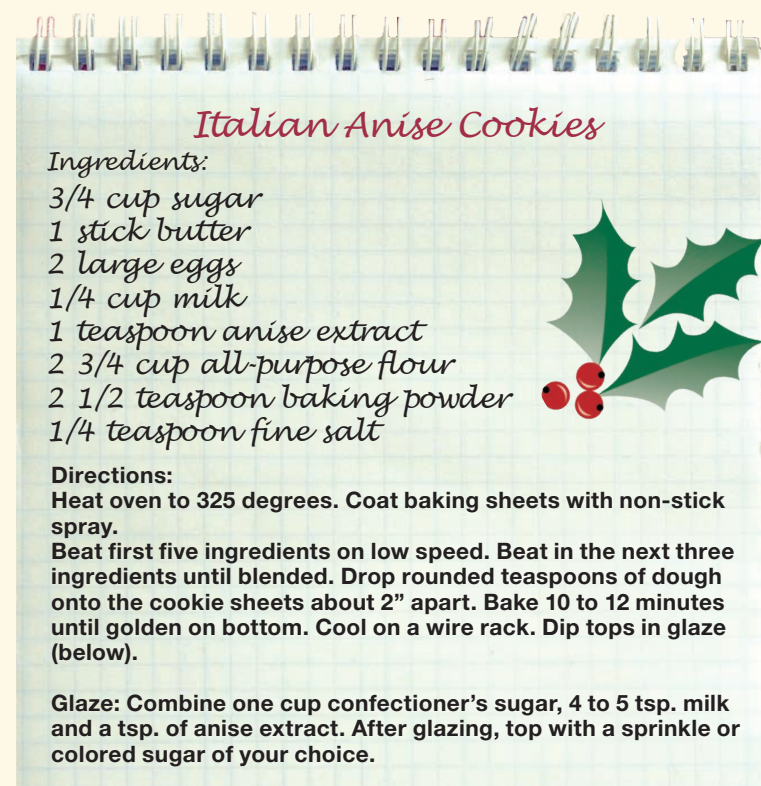


# Holiday FAVORITES

*From our...  
recipe files  
...to yours*

Our favorite recipes for the holidays or other days

**T**he holidays are a time of giving, and of creating special meals for family and friends. With that in mind, staff members at TurleyCT Community Publications are sharing some of our very favorite recipes, delicious at the holidays or any time of the year.



*Italian Anise Cookies*

**Ingredients:**  
 3/4 cup sugar  
 1 stick butter  
 2 large eggs  
 1/4 cup milk  
 1 teaspoon anise extract  
 2 3/4 cup all-purpose flour  
 2 1/2 teaspoon baking powder  
 1/4 teaspoon fine salt

**Directions:**  
 Heat oven to 325 degrees. Coat baking sheets with non-stick spray.  
 Beat first five ingredients on low speed. Beat in the next three ingredients until blended. Drop rounded teaspoons of dough onto the cookie sheets about 2" apart. Bake 10 to 12 minutes until golden on bottom. Cool on a wire rack. Dip tops in glaze (below).

**Glaze:** Combine one cup confectioner's sugar, 4 to 5 tsp. milk and a tsp. of anise extract. After glazing, top with a sprinkle or colored sugar of your choice.

Patty Ewert, one of our account executives, shared this recipe for easy Italian anise cookies. She said they're great for the holidays.



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## Holiday LIFE

### Bermuda Christmas Cassava Pie

#### Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 pounds (about 4 1/2 cups) *harina de manioc*  
(cassava meal, available at Hispanic markets and some specialty food shops)
- 8 cups milk
- 3/4 teaspoon dried thyme, crumbled
- 2 pounds chicken breasts, halved
- 1 1/2 pounds chicken thighs and drumsticks
- 3 pounds boneless beef chuck, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 3/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 2 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1 cup unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 8 large eggs
- 1 1/4 teaspoons freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- 1 3/4 cups firmly packed light brown sugar

#### Directions:

In a large bowl, combine *harina de manioc* and milk, stir until well combined. Cover and let stand 3 hours or overnight.

In a heavy 4-quart saucepan, bring 2 cups of water to boil with the thyme. Add chicken, cover and simmer 30 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer chicken to a bowl and reserve the broth. Skin and bone the chicken and cut it into 1-inch pieces. Bring reserved broth to a boil, add beef and cook, covered, over medium-high for 5 minutes or until it just begins to boil. Transfer beef with the slotted spoon. Pour broth into a heatproof bowl, skim fat from surface and reserve. To the beef, add the chicken, pepper and a teaspoon of salt, tossing until combined. Add the melted butter to the *harina de manioc* mixture, using your hands to blend until the butter is completely incorporated.

In a bowl, whisk together the eggs, the remaining 1 1/2 teaspoon salt, nutmeg, vanilla and brown sugar until smooth. Gradually add it to



This amazing meat pie recipe comes from Lynn Woike, editor of West Hartford LIFE and Valley LIFE.

*"Because the co-worker with whom my sister shared a cab in 1978 panicked when he realized he'd forgot the cassava meal back at the hotel, our little German-Italian family will eat Bermuda Pie again this Christmas. A foodie, my sister followed him into a little market the cabbie detoured to on the way to the airport and bought the magic ingredient to a dish she'd never heard of. My ex-mother-in-law, a native of Bermuda, shared her recipe and my sister has been making her own version of it ever since."*

the *harina de manioc* mixture, stirring with a wooden spoon until well combined.

Pour half the batter into a well-buttered 5-quart baking pan that is 14 1/2 inches by 10 inches by 2 1/4 inches and spread evenly. Spoon the meat mixture over the batter, lightly pressing it into the batter. Spoon about 1/2 cup of the reserved broth over the mixture, or enough to moisten the meat well, then spread the remaining batter over the meat, leaving a 2-inch wide opening in the center of the pie. Brush the top with some of the reserved broth and place the pie on a baking sheet in the middle of a 350-degree oven for 90 minutes to 2 hours (or more), while basting the top every 20-30 minutes. The pie is done when the top is a deep gold and a tester comes out moist but not sticky. If the edges of the pie become very dark, cover them loosely with foil.

Let the pie cool 20 minutes before serving.

Serves 12-14.

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## Holiday LIFE

Here's another meat pie recipe, this one from Mark Jahne, editor of Newington LIFE, Rocky Hill LIFE, Cromwell LIFE and Wethersfield LIFE.

*My mother (Theresa) likes to cook this traditional French-Canadian holiday meal for Christmas and New Year's Day. Tourtiere – also called meat pie or pork pie – is classic winter comfort food. The following is a recipe for two pies.*

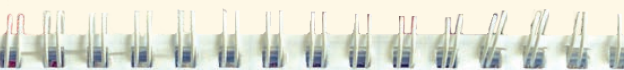


### Tourtiera

#### Ingredients:

2 pounds ground pork  
2 medium onions, chopped and mashed  
1/2 teaspoon pepper  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon ground cloves  
1 teaspoon allspice  
Double crusts for two 9-inch pies

Place all ingredients in a large pot and add enough water to cover about three-quarters of the ingredients. Simmer, stirring frequently, for about 30 minutes. Adjust seasonings to taste. Divide the mixture between two pastry-lined 9-inch pie plates. Cover the top with pastry crust and make slits in the top crust to allow steam to escape. Bake at 425 degrees for 10 minutes, then reduce the temperature to 375 and bake another 20 minutes, or until the pies are golden brown. Makes 8 to 12 servings.



### Chocolate Truffles

#### Ingredients:

1/2 pound bittersweet chocolate  
1/2 pound semisweet chocolate  
1 cup heavy cream  
2 tablespoons orange-flavored liqueur (optional)  
1 tablespoon prepared coffee  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract  
Confectioners' sugar  
Cocoa powder

#### Directions:

Chop the chocolate finely with a sharp knife. Place in a heat-proof mixing bowl.

Heat the cream in a small saucepan until it just boils. Turn off the heat and allow the cream to sit for 20 seconds. Pour the cream through a fine-meshed sieve into the bowl with the chocolate. With a wire whisk, slowly stir the cream and chocolates together until the chocolate is completely melted. Whisk in the orange flavored liqueur, if using it, and the coffee and vanilla. Set aside at room temperature for one hour.

With 2 teaspoons, spoon round balls of the chocolate mixture onto a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Roll each ball of chocolate in your hands to roughly make it round. Roll in confectioners' sugar, cocoa powder or both.

These will keep refrigerated for weeks, but serve them at room temperature.

This recipe, involving chocolate and sinfully good, comes from Alicia B. Smith, our associate editor.

*"Growing up my family had several holiday traditions – cutting our own tree, our cardinal bird, midnight mass – but none of them related to food. When I got married, I was determined to carry on some of the traditions I had enjoyed while also incorporating those from my husband's family. That's why we have an enormous tree stuffed into our living room and I make bacon wrapped scallops to enjoy while we decorate said tree. One year I decided that we needed chocolate, because why not? This recipe was from an episode I saw on the Food Network and thought it would be the perfect thing. They are messy to make, but delicious to eat!"*

*When we decorate the tree we feast on the scallops and the truffles and my husband serves as bartender whipping up a mean Manhattan, or for an interesting flavor treat maybe a Hooker Chocolate Truffle from the Hooker Brewing Company, based in Bloomfield.*

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## Holiday LIFE

### Mara Dresner's Baked Ziti

Prep Time: 5 minutes  
Bake Time: 60 minutes  
Serves: 8

#### Ingredients:

1 26-ounce jar pasta sauce  
*don't worry if it's not exactly 26 ounces)*  
1 1/2 cups water  
15 ounce container ricotta  
*part skim is fine)*  
1/4 cup grated parmesan (fresh is best)  
2 cups shredded mozzarella  
8 ounces uncooked ziti  
*(give or take; I use whole wheat)*  
Frozen vegetables, optional  
*(a couple of handfuls; I usually use broccoli florets)*

#### Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.  
Combine sauce and water.  
Stir in ricotta, parmesan and 1 cup mozzarella.  
Add in uncooked ziti and vegetables, if using.  
Spoon ziti mixture into 13" x 9" baking dish.  
Cover with foil and bake 55 minutes.  
Remove foil and sprinkle with remaining mozzarella.  
Bake uncovered for 5 minutes.

This recipe from staff writer Mara Dresner is a delicious – and vegetarian – version of an Italian favorite. *"Everyone loves this vegetarian recipe and it's a breeze to make. You can prepare it the day before, and it's easy to transport and very forgiving. Plus, you can easily "make it your own" and add a few healthy hacks. I'm not sure where I first found it, but I've noted some of my tips. If you do make ahead, save a little cheese (or bring more) to sprinkle on top when you reheat. Leftovers will do well in the fridge or freezer."*

### Brandy (or Rum) Balls

#### Ingredients:

1 box crushed vanilla wafers  
*(Nilla brand is best)*  
1 cup sifted confectioner's sugar  
2 tablespoons cocoa powder  
1/2 cup finely chopped walnuts  
*(optional)*  
1/4 cup brandy or rum  
1/4 cup light corn syrup

#### Directions:

Combine all ingredients. Add a little water – about 1 1/2 tablespoons – and form 3/4-inch balls. Roll in colored sugar and store in a tightly covered container.

The above is from the family recipe box of Glastonbury LIFE editor Nancy Thompson. *"Many came from people I haven't seen in years, but I think of them whenever I recreate their beloved recipes. Like Alicia's truffles, this is pretty messy to make, but oh, so good."*

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**Holiday LIFE**

# Ornament stories

*The holiday season is upon us, and with that comes a wide array of traditions. From handmade creations to pieces passed down through the years, these ornaments are part of the traditions for our staffers.*

by Nancy Thompson

**T**he decorations on our family's Christmas tree are a history of the past 47 years, but one ornament has a place of honor every year. When our children were little, we packed away the fancy breakable ornaments we'd bought in the past and decorated the tree with what we thought were kid-proof baubles and doo-dads, including a couple of plastic foam ornaments designed to look like gingerbread cookies. Our son, then a toddler and a huge fan of Cookie Monster, thought the gingerbread boy was real and took a large bite out of its head. The ornament has broken in two a couple of times, been fixed badly at least once, and now is held together by a tongue depressor attached with tape on its backside, but we all love it and laugh when we remember the story.



Photo by Nancy Thompson

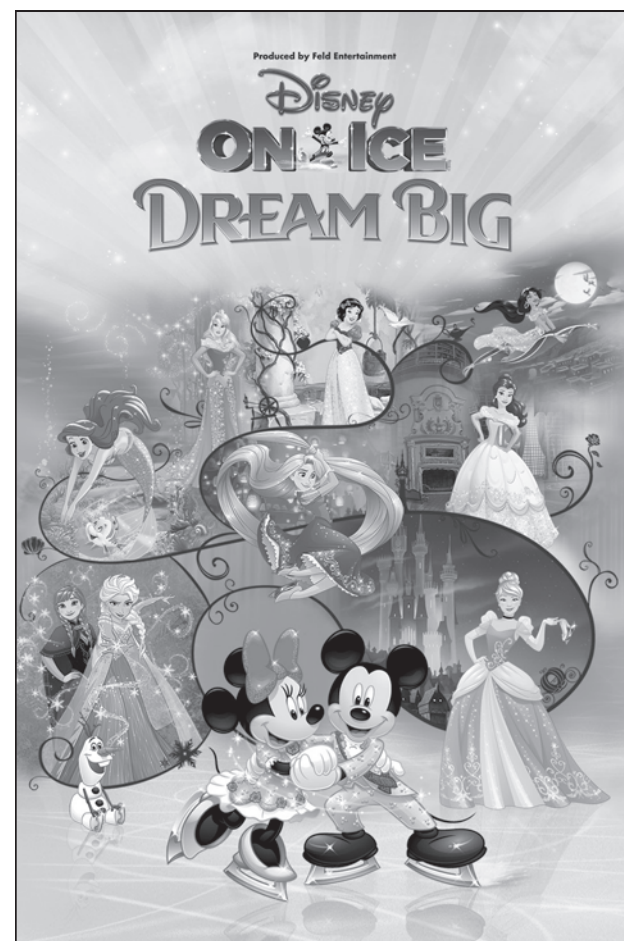
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## Holiday LIFE



Photo by Alicia Smith

by Alicia B. Smith

**G**rowing up, Christmas for my family was about THE TREE. We have legendary stories about procuring the greenery — from trudging through feet of snow to cut our own to watching the needles fall off within minutes of setting it into its stand.

There are tales too of decorating the poor thing within an inch of its soon to be departed life. Lights? Yes! Tinsel? Yup! Another box of ornaments that did not get put on? There's always room for more!

Among the ornaments that stand out in my mind are the hundreds, if not millions, of tiny colored balls that my Dad loved. I never found out why he was attracted to the diminutive orbs, but every year he would stand on a chair painstakingly placing each of these tiny bulbs on the tree. Hundreds of them. To me it would seem like he was on that chair for hours.

When all was said and done, and my Dad finally down from his perch, we always admired our masterpiece. For some it might be a mess, for us, it was beautiful.

With my parents gone, the ornaments have been divided among my brothers and I. My husband and I have accrued a personal assortment of our own to mix with those from our families.

Each year when I decorate my own tree, in my own home, I come across the one remaining soldier—a tiny, yellow ball. It always puts a smile on my face as it instantly takes me back to my boisterous, large, putting-up-the-tree-is-a-less-than-joyful-but-we-will-prevail days of Christmas past.

I always need a chair to put it up near the top of my tree, too.



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## Holiday LIFE

by Allie Rivera

**O**ur family tree will never be pictured in Better

Homes and Gardens. Amid the strings of tiny, brightly colored lights are always a strange assortment of mismatching ornaments stretching back through my parents' 37-year marriage. Also included are the home-made pieces my brother and I created and pictures of each of us through the years. Though I now live in Hartford and my brother is up in Boston, we still wait until the four of us are all together at my parents' home in Clinton to put all of the ornaments up. Unwrapping each individually packaged ornament is like opening Christmas presents early, and each one leads to the four of us reminiscing on various memories. This one is of my first Christmas. We have a similar one for my brother, and every year as we go through the ornaments with photos, we laugh at our outfits and faces. It typically takes us hours to decorate with the breaks to share stories and sing along to the radio, and looking back, I treasure those memories just as much as the ones we were laughing about.



Photo by Allie Rivera

by Lynn Woike

**I** celebrate Yule with an ever-green tree adorned only with natural

objects. Many are stars and there are some shells. This ornament is both – a starfish with two shells, a piece of beach glass, a bit of fabric and some ribbon. I got it 15 years ago on Chebeague Island, Maine. During a difficult time in my life, I visited there several times, and bought it from a local artist there. Every year when I unpack this ornament, I unpack the memories of the sun, the sand and the smell of the salt water. Sometimes, like last January, when the tree is taken down, this ornament does not get put down in the basement with the other decorations; it finds a place to hang where it brings back the memories of the healing time spent in that safe harbor.



Photo by Lynn Woike

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# Holiday LIFE



by Abigail Albair

**T**hroughout my entire childhood, each year my parents and I would make the short trip from our home to Starkey’s Tree Farm to select a tree for our living room. We would spend a Saturday evening watching the holiday classic “It’s a Wonderful Life” and decorate the tree with an eclectic mix of ornaments – one from every spot we’d vacationed as a family, one to mark every anniversary and occasion, and several made by yours truly out of Popsicle sticks and sequins. When my husband and I were married, we brought to our first tree a collection of ornaments from our past. I retained the beautifully hand-crafted ornaments made for me by a high school friend’s “memere,” he kept his favorite Yankees’ pieces and a few made for him by his father. Over the years, we added one for our dog, Bailey, one from our honeymoon and ones we collected on trips to Rome, Paris and London. This year, however, we add the most precious of all. Our son was born in April, and while we’re certain to get at least a few traditional “Baby’s First Christmas” ornaments to decorate the tree with this year, our favorite will likely always be this sparkling blue Mickey Mouse, customized with our son’s name. His little four-month-old eyes grew wide with wonder during his first trip to the Happiest Place on Earth and we spent many minutes as he peacefully napped in his stroller searching through the Christmas shop in the Magic Kingdom for the perfect way to memorialize the trip on our tree. My hope is, one day, he will take it out each Christmas and smile. He will never remember that first vacation with mom and dad, but we will certainly never forget. **WHL**

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A group of men who grew up together have continued to meet annually. The photo at left was taken in the mid-1980's, while the one below was in November 2016.



# Memory lane

Mens group meets for the 70th year

by Kaitlin McCallum

Assistant Editor

When Morton Ward and his friends met, they were just kids, boys playing ball out in the street in front of their homes. The group had little in the way of money. They lived in the North End of Hartford and it was the Great Depression. If their parents had jobs and there was food on the table, they were lucky.

But they were happy. They grew up together, through an endless series of adventures, football games in the park, sledding down Avon Street and sharing the joys of youth, until all but one graduated from Hartford High; living on the other side of the street, Jack Mishkin graduated from Weaver. One by one, they went into the Army, the Navy, the Air Corps – and disappeared.

Miraculously, each one of the group of about 25 made it home safely. A few met up several years later at the Hartford High-Weaver football game. When the game got rained out, the group found shelter at one their homes. The next year,

they did the same. Every year after, getting together to catch up, turn over the old stories and look back on the good times.

That first gathering was 70 years ago.

The group has just seven members remaining, most of whom now live in West Hartford. Their final official meeting was November 27 at Angelo's on Main at the Rockledge Golf Course, celebrating the lives and the triumphs of the men, and the families they had built and those they had lost along the way.

"We all lived in the original North End of Hartford. I lived in a building on the corner of Avon and Main Street. Most lived down the street from that. As little kids we used to go out and play in the streets there. ...There were no parks, so the streets were where we played," Ward said at the gathering.

Those days of sledding down the middle of the street on snowy days and playing football were halted by World War II as each was sent overseas. When they returned, they picked right back up.

"How it started was four of the

group and two of their sons went to the Hartford High and Weaver game and it rained," recalls Lenora Rosenblum, whose husband, Lewis, was one of those childhood friends. Lewis passed away in 1978 but the group of men continued to include her in the yearly gatherings, even before they began bringing their wives along.

"I said, 'Look it, I'll make some coffee,' and Abe Seagal ran out and got some bagels," Rosenblum said, describing the first impromptu brunch.

The group settled in her kitchen and caught up on all the news since they had gone into the service – where they had been stationed, getting jobs, getting married and having children.

The following year, Rosenblum said, they set out for the Hartford-Weaver game and again it rained. The group again took refuge at her home for brunch.

"I said, 'We can gather here, I'll make the breakfast,'" Rosenblum recalled. "Then they started getting all the other guys they were friends with. There were about 25 or 26. All in my house."

The Thanksgiving tradition continued there until 1978, when her husband died.

"After that, the other wives decided they should take a turn," she said.

Perhaps the other wives were less enthusiastic about the large crowd that the gathering had grown into and the event quickly moved to local restaurants.

At first it was just the men, who would gather each Thanksgiving morning, plus Rosenblum, but eventually they decided to invite the wives – especially after their husbands had passed away. The women became an integral part of the tradition, which all of them treasured.

In part, it was a way to hold on to the good times, a simpler time, they all agree. It was also a way to remember the amazing blessings they all had seen in their lives.

"We all came from nothing and everybody became successful. We all made a nice living and had a nice family," Ward says. "We had Jewish, Italian, Polish, a couple of blacks, but everybody did exceptionally well for themselves."



Each and every one of them made a good living."

"All the guys in this group have beaten the odds, being born in the Depression and doing well and having kids who have done well. He's proud of that," Barbara Ward-Zimmerman says of her father, who had been a continuous driver in keeping the group together.

"My father owned a grocery store and all these kids used to come in. Abe lived on Belden Street and Nick lived on Avon Street," remembers Mishkin. "I looked forward to this every year. It brought back old times. A lot of good times when we played football in the streets."

The gathering at Angelo's was punctuated by several toasts, to health, to friendship, to old times.

"This isn't going to end this. We can keep getting together," Ward promised in his toast.

"Nobody's going to stop us. There's always the telephone for saying hello. This toast is for you all," Bernie Bodine said. Bodine, who owned a Pontiac dealership,

arranged the event, including a champagne toast and flowers for the ladies.

The clink of glasses prompts the hushed remembering of toasts in years gone by and how the annual meeting date settled on the Sunday after Thanksgiving.

"They would make a toast to the Army, then they would

make a toast to the Navy, then to the

Air Corps and whatever branch they were in," Rosenblum said. "They made toast after toast."

Abe Sigal, the subject of the story in question, offers it up without embarrassment.

"One time we all got real drunk and I drove everybody home. Then I came home and it was Thanksgiving Day. We were supposed to go to my

sister's house and I couldn't drive. My wife drove me there and then the next day she says, 'Forget about Thanksgiving Day,'" Sigal said.

Asked what the men did each year at the annual gathering, he replied, "Drank, told war stories,

lied to each other. We

were friends, very

very close, all of

us. We grew

up together."

Mishkin

gestured

across the

table to

two-time

Olympic gold

medalist Lindy

Remigino, who

joined the group courtesy

of his late older brother.

"Lindy, did you tell 'em how you learned to run? We threw rocks at him because he wanted to follow his older brother."

Though each man has done well for himself, they are proud of

their friend, "the fastest man in the world." Now, Remigino quipped, "you can time me with a calendar."

"I'm the baby of the group. I'm 85. These guys are all over 90. But they're like brothers. And sisters, too," he said.

Revisiting the old stories each year enabled the men to keep memories of their friends alive.

Mishkin mentions William Singer, Sigal's late cousin.

"When I was in the service, one member of the group, William Singer, came to see me in Oran, Morocco. I nearly fainted when I saw him. I was in my cot sleeping and I thought I was dreaming. He was on a repair ship in the Navy. We were fairly close. That's why he went out of his way to look for me. It was unbelievable," Mishkin recalled.

"We were all so friendly, us kids, that it went into being adults," Ward explains. "It's unusual to get together for 70 years. I don't think in the whole United States there's another group like that. A story like this you don't hear all the time." **WHL**

**"I'm the baby of the group. I'm 85. These guys are all over 90. But they're like brothers."**

**-Lindy Remigino**

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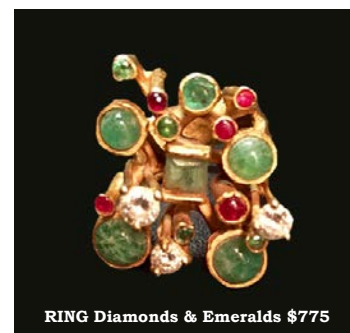
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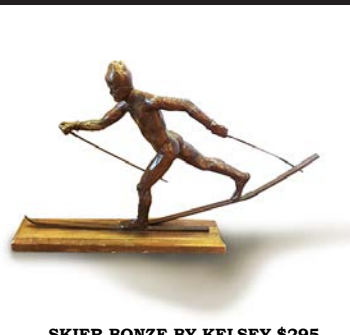
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## EDUCATION

Photos by Alicia B. Smith



Neveah Rivera practices the sign for the City of Venice.

# A good sign

Students are learning American Sign Language

by Alicia B. Smith  
Associate Editor

The fact that Mick Posner's classroom is quiet does not mean that no one is speaking. Rather than boisterous voices, in here, the fingers do the talking.

Posner is deaf and currently teaches American Sign Language, or ASL, at both Conard and Hall high schools. This is the first year the language has been offered as a foreign language along with Spanish, French and Chinese.

Posner said he has 130 students in the program that offers ASL I. ASL II will be added next year. Students can also opt for an independent study.

World Language Department supervisor Elena Sada explained that previously, high school students could join the American Sign Language Club or do an independent study if they were interested in learning the language.

Many students expressed interest in having ASL included as an option because they have friends or relatives who are deaf.

Several of the students in his classes also take another foreign language such as Spanish.

Learning English or a Romance language can be challenging and ASL is no exception. Posner said students have to be taught a new grammatical structure and there is no written form of ASL.

"I teach everything," Posner said. "Vocabulary, grammar and structure and ... deaf culture."

Along with signing ASL, Posner is competent in reading lips. He will use a

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## EDUCATION

whiteboard to write out his responses, especially when communicating with someone who does not know ASL. He also uses the whiteboard to write out instructions.

Sada explained that ASL does not have a tense; another difference students have to familiarize themselves with as they learn.

"As a linguist, it's fascinating," she said, adding that Posner's students have a total immersion experience as he signs throughout the entire class.

Posner explained that ASL derives from French Sign Language and Martha's Vineyard Sign Language and became its own language by combining elements of those two.

Thomas Gallaudet, who first encountered a deaf child in Hartford named Alice Cogswell, developed American Sign Language. Gallaudet traveled to France to meet Laurent Clerk, a teacher of the deaf. The two men returned to this country and established the America School for the Deaf in 1817.

Posner's eighth-period students recreated this history in a timeline when they engaged in the Mannequin Challenge, and posed to show the history and prominent individuals associated with ASL.

One of the things new students learn is that when signing ASL, an adjective follows the noun it describes, which is what is done in French. For example, a blue house is how it is described in English; however, the phrase would be "house blue," in French and ASL.

"Also, ASL is a visual language," Posner said. "We put the question word at the end. For example, 'Your name what?' or 'You from where?'"

Once students in Posner's sixth-period class settled into their seats, he began the day's lesson including learning to sign the names of various

Italian cities. He then introduced students to new vocabulary relating to social media.

"Why? [Social media] is a huge part of deaf culture. It allows us to keep in touch with one another without using spoken language," Posner said.

"It's like an equalizer," Sada explained.

After Posner went through the signs for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and more, students were given a card with a social media-related word written on it and they had to sign to the class about how they use the particular platform written on their card.

**"The class can be quiet but it gets very lively."  
-Mick Posner**

Junior Lauren Vitelli also made a presentation, entirely in ASL, as she went through slides of her trip to Italy.

Another project Posner is in the process of creating is the Earmuffs Project. His students, with their parent's permission, will be given sound-proof apparatus that will limit what they can hear. They will be asked to wear their earmuffs through an entire weekend as a way to develop cultural competence and gain an understanding of what those who are hard of hearing experience on a day-to-day basis.

"Students will wear earmuffs for an entire weekend, as much as possible, to experience total silence and having to rely on visual cues 100 percent of the time," Posner said.

He is also planning a field trip to the nearby American School for the Deaf so his students get to experience what a typical day is like for those students.

"There are so many things we take for granted because we hear," Sada said. "We are really pleased, he is a living example of living a joyful life,"

she said of the teacher. "His students respect him a lot."

At the start of the year, Posner said his students struggle with him not using his voice in class.

"The class can be quiet but it gets very lively," he said.

One of the things Posner said helps in his classroom is he has an established routine so students know what to expect when they come in each day, even if they may be unsure of what he is communicating to them.

Currently, Posner is teaching two classes at Hall and three at Conard.

Lauren said she took a class in ASL in elementary school and loved it. When she had an opportunity to take it up again in high school she selected the class.

"I think it's really cool," Lauren said. "I learned it's the third most common language in the United States after English and Spanish."

Rachel Massey, a junior, has been friends with Lauren who taught her a few signs. The two would often use ASL to talk to one another during their shared classes.

"I like how he teaches it," Rachel said.

At this point, she said, she feels she can understand the signs better than she can actually sign the language.

Emily Birnbaum, a sophomore, was interested in learning ASL because her cousin is an interpreter and she thought it would be neat if she and her cousin could communicate with one another without the rest of the family knowing what they were talking about.

"I try to use it in class as often as I can," Emily said.

Sophomore Madison Cohen learned to sign when she was very young and not verbal. Eventually she developed language skills and said she wanted to continue with her sign language, in part because one of her friends has a deaf friend. **WHL**



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## EDUCATION

Photos courtesy of Talcott Mountain Science Center



# 'Leaders of their own learning'

STEM education methods shape happier, more resilient students

by Kaitlin McCallum  
Assistant Editor

Learning is fun when students get to experience the unexpected.

**T**he educational fads that have marked eras of student learning are plentiful – memorization, whole language and pho-

nics, No Child Left Behind and New Math all come to mind – but STEM, the buzzword on many people's lips, may not be a trend at all.

So says Jonathan Craig, executive director at Talcott Mountain Science

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Center and Talcott Mountain Academy. Instead, we are just rediscovering the way people have learned for centuries, free from the confines of a classroom.

"Education is a very new concept in terms of human evolution," Craig explained. "If you go back 200 years, how would you learn? By watching somebody else, mentoring, apprenticing; but you didn't go to school on a bus and spend six hours of your day listening to 10 different people sitting behind a desk and writing. So the whole concept of trying to make that work has only been 100 years of manipulation."

The problem began with compartmentalizing learning into subjects – reading, writing, math, with maybe some history and science thrown in, Craig said – and the goal was to score well on some type of test. And since it was a measurable goal, the system of education just continued to refine the process to improve its results – without really questioning the goal.

"We're seeing that those children are coming out and yeah, they can speak English, maybe do some math

**"The capability and the capacity for children to learn is immense, but we're not tapping into it."**

**–Jonathan Craig**

problems, but they don't know anything about the society they live in, except what they learned from the world around them," he said.

Craig also noted children come to school already having developed a lexicon of nearly 3,000 words – no curriculum needed.

"The human brain has 100 million neurons connected to thousands of receptors. ... The capability and the capacity for children to learn is immense, but we're not tapping into it."

STEM expands the possibilities, Craig said, allowing education and the children it reaches to be so much more.

### What is STEM?

STEM is an acronym for science, technology, engineering and math, taught using an interdisciplinary and

hands-on approach. Students are encouraged to ask their own questions, seek their own answers and learn by applying their skills in each subject to solve a problem.

"Every STEM school will have a little bit of a different philosophy," said Sharon Zajac, STEM specialist at the Florence E. Smith STEM School, a magnet school serving West Hartford students. "For us it's about lifelong skills for 21st century living."

The school, which launched five years ago through a partnership with the Connecticut Science Center, operates on eight habits of mind that students, staff and parents formulated together to govern their approach to learning. They are communication, curiosity, collaboration, kindness, creativity, perseverance, critical thinking and problem

solving, and responsibility.

"STEM is about thinking and being creative and problem solving. STEM affects our daily lives. Technology is everywhere. It's not just computers or something electronic. It's the button on your coat, a glass, a knife and a fork, things that have been created by humans to solve a problem or make life better. You could not have engineering without science because engineers apply scientific knowledge, so this is that reciprocal relationship. And math is necessary in everything."

The school integrates its curriculum whenever possible, weaving the concepts of science, technology, engineering and math together through experiments and exploration.

"STEM is huge on questioning. When we began five years ago, we created a culture to have kids noticing and wondering, whether in art, music, math, asking, 'What do you notice? What do you wonder?' It brings the student's voice into learning," Zajack said.

At Talcott Mountain Academy, Craig said, that's how students have been learning since the small private

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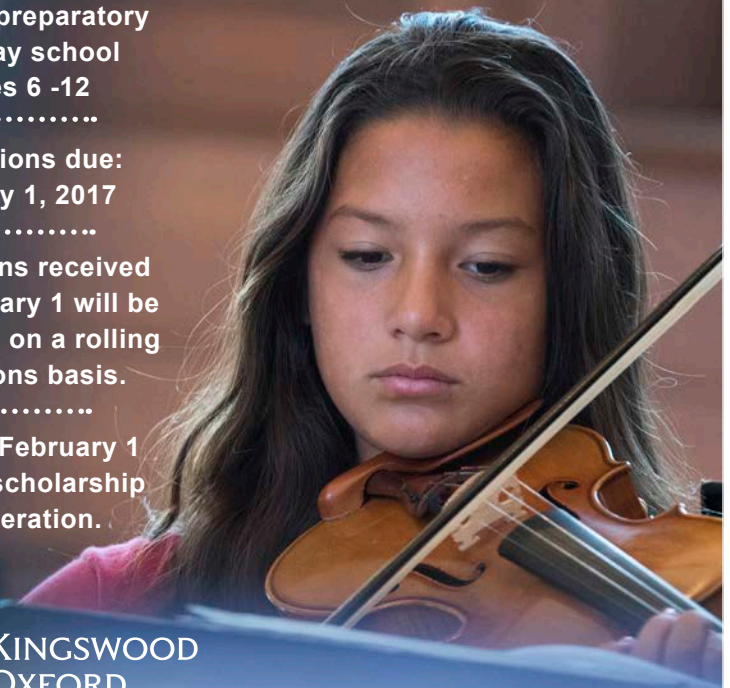
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school opened its doors 50 years ago.

"There's rote memorization and episodic learning. If you have an episode that is positive, you are going to remember that and the circumstances that made you interested in learning," Craig said.

Most teaching is linear and follows a textbook or curriculum, leaving little change for opportunities that might spark students' interest, such as a recent rocket launch or upcoming eclipse. At Talcott, he said, teachers seek out those opportunities and often try to work them into lessons in several areas.

"Learning in a lot of situations is compartmentalized and that is OK for certain things, but there should be some coordination. You think about a factory. You want to build something you start with a frame, put wheels on the chassis, then get the body done. In schools we put kids in math then English and forget that they never put the car together."

At Talcott Mountain, Craig said, each child putting the car together for himself or herself is important. The entire school – kindergarten through eighth grade – comprises just 70 students, with classes of no more than 10 students and some with just four or five. That way, Craig said, one child isn't doing all the learning, each child gets to participate.

"When you think of hands-on and doing STEM exercises, you want kids to be doing something individual. They don't want to see the teacher do it. You want them to say, 'I got to do it and it really worked.'"

### STEM in every school

It's not just specialized schools like Smith STEM School and Talcott Mountain Academy that are pursuing a more authentic approach to the STEM subjects. The Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Academy for Teachers at the Connecticut Science Center provides professional development opportunities for teachers from school districts across the state in teaching STEM, inquiry-based learning and student engagement. Courses in its Inquiry for Teaching and Learning series can also be applied toward a master's degree. The academy is also the state's official professional development provider for Engineering is Elementary, an award-winning curriculum integrating STEM across curriculum for first through fifth grade.

Smith STEM School uses the curriculum.

Talcott Mountain Science Center also offers professional development with ongoing support for teachers and districts and partners with districts to bring science activities to local classrooms. Craig said Talcott has worked with West Hartford, Avon, Simsbury, Bloomfield and other districts in the area.

The state is pushing public school districts into an emphasis on STEM and a rethinking of how it is taught. The Next Generation Science Standards, adopted by Connecticut as the mandatory state science standards, calls itself a "three-dimensional" method of learning, encompassing core ideas ("key ideas in science that have broad



Photos courtesy of Talcott Mountain Science Center

**Students investigate concepts of engineering by building structures with strands of spaghetti and marshmallows.**

importance within or across multiple science or engineering disciplines"), science and engineering practices ("Students engage in practices to build, deepen, and apply their knowledge of core ideas and crosscutting concepts.") and cross-cutting concepts ("connections across the four domains of science").

In practice, local districts are working to incorporate these STEM practices into their curriculum.

In Farmington, each grade plans classes focusing on investigation, engineering and scientific explanation.

"In kindergarten, for example, that's where we start. We have exploration time every day," explained Veronica Ruzek, director of curriculum for Farmington Public Schools. "When we got full-day kindergarten instead of saying, 'Let's fill that time up

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with more literacy or math,' we said, 'Let's make it more for play time,' and science and math are taught through that."

The curriculum is broken down into units, Ruzek said, in which students read stories based around a theme.

"The story launches an engineering project. So they read about the three little pigs and then acting like engineers, they experiment with materials, test their strength, and it's connected to a learning target," she said. Students can make a hypothesis, build a structure and prove their theory.

The concept extends into older grades where, Ruzek said, teachers are working on structuring larger-scale projects for students to test their skills and be "leaders of their own learning."

"We looked a lot at the research of motivation theory and started saying we need bigger kinds of projects that are going to engage kids so they'll want to do the work and that all prompted this idea that subjects have to be more integrated."

Ruzek also said limitations in the district's school buildings hold them back. In ninth grade, students develop a roller coaster braking system, which has created a problem for teachers who have nowhere to store the large projects when classes switch every 40 minutes. Plans for renovating Farmington High School aim to address the limitations.

Canton has developed a similar approach and Simsbury

has created special programs to ignite an interest by girls in the STEM subjects.

Ethel Walker School in Simsbury has also put a focus on STEM learning and, in one class, will join with students around the world to crowdsource antibiotic discovery. The school recently received a \$9,300 grant from the VWR Foundation to fund its new Honors Biochemistry course in partnership with the Small World Initiative project. The SWI was formulated at Yale University in 2012 to encourage students to pursue STEM careers through hands-on and field research. The project uses research by volunteers around the world to achieve scientific goals while also encouraging learning. Ethel Walker is one of only five high schools in the country to participate.

"Through a series of student-driven experiments, the students will collect soil samples, isolate diverse bacteria, test their bacteria against clinically relevant microorganisms, and characterize those showing antibiotic activity with the hope of developing new antibiotics," a release from the school stated.

"Our hope is to encourage students at our all-girls school to engage with authentic scientific research at an earlier age," said Dr. Julia Sheldon, who will co-teach the Ethel Walker course. "In high school they often see 'cookbook' lab experiments where the expected results are already known. The difference with our course is that our students and instructors don't know what will happen during our experiments. Our girls will need to adapt and deal with unexpected situations and setbacks along the way. We hope this will build resilience in our students and serve as a true introduction to the research process."

### STEM breeds success

Craig is sure that it works, that teaching this way makes an enormous difference in what and who students are able to be.

"It gives them the ability to think on their feet, the idea of things make sense to them. They

have common sense and I've found if kids own the subject they're working on, they end up with self-confidence and they can achieve anything. It's building self-confidence," he said.

"We've been doing this for 50 years and we have adults coming back to us saying, 'You lit the fire; you started me on this path.' We are finding they are engineers, election gurus, they are doctors. ... What we find is that we are a catalyst and we captured their interest in such a way that they say, 'That's what I want to do when I grow up,'" Craig said.

This past summer, he worked on a grant project to modify college-level curriculum for younger students and came across a biomedical engineering professor at Trinity College.

"He said to me, 'I want to show you something.' And he brought out an old plastic, red-and-clear box with some electronics inside and he said, 'I made this radio at Talcott Mountain when I was in fifth grade.'"

Zajack shares the same certainty.

"When we first started with inquiry, [our test scores] shot right up. There was significant improvement in science," she said.

Zajack has been teaching in West Hartford for 28 years, at Webster Hill, Charter Oak, Bugbee and Morley. She also said she sees an increase in engagement, motivation and self-esteem.

"Here a student proposes a question and it's the teacher's job not to tell them the answer, but to help guide them to understanding. When they're given tasks that have more than one answer, that's liberating. ... A big change that's happened is kids take more risks. The engineering design process lends itself to that because it's a process. You ask yourself, 'How can I improve?'"

She said regardless of what career her students pursue, a STEM education prepares them to succeed in what's ahead.

"I have three kids and I'm a Newington resident. Though I'm not moving, I would move to West Hartford just so my kids could attend this school. That's how much I believe in it." **WHL**



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Photos courtesy of the West Hartford Historical Society

Buckland's restaurant is where the 1867 annual town meeting was held.

## LIFE long ago

Looking back at town happenings

by Lynn Woike  
Editor

**A**long the rear wall of a vault in the town clerk's office are records that go back to the beginning of the town's incorporation. Some oversized journals have handwritten entries. Some books are dusty. Most seem largely ignored. On their pages are the decisions, data and details that have shaped the town. Each month we will look into those volumes and provide a sampling of what was happening at different periods in time.

### 150 years ago: 1867

The town's annual meeting was held January 7 at Leonard Buckland's restaurant. Elected for the coming year were Edward Selden, B.W. Hamilton, Thomas Brace, William Stores, William Sly, Lyman Hotchkis and John Griswold.

### 125 years ago: 1892

According to the treasurer's report in the Annual Report, the town borrowed \$500 from the U.S. Bank on January 11 and another \$1,000 on January 28.

### 120 years ago: 1897

On January 11, the Selectmen and Sewer Commission discussed the matter of a card index for the land records.

### 110 years ago: 1907

Minutes from the January 2 meeting of the Selectmen and Sewer Commission state a "recent incursions of

**A hundred years ago, the town accepted Four Mile Road as a public highway for 285 feet south from Farmington Avenue.**



mad dogs," prompting a discussion about muzzling dogs. Recommendations from the justices, to whom the matter was referred the previous November, were considered. Then, following a telephone conversation with J.L. Barbour, which resulted in striking out a clause authorizing anyone to kill unmuzzled dogs, it was voted that as of January 5, 1907, "all dogs owned or being in any way within the limits of the Town of West Hartford ... be muzzled with such a wire cage muzzle as shall prevent the biting of people or animals; such muzzles to be worn at all times when the dogs are running at large." Constable Joseph H. Strong was appointed to enforce the order. "All dogs found not muzzled with such wire cage muzzles shall be held in custody by the Constable for three days and then killed; unless claimed by the owners who shall pay \$3 for each dog so claimed." The constable was to mail cards with this information to all owners of registered dogs.



At its January 14 meeting, in other dog-related incidents, it was voted "to pay Swen Nelson \$10 for fowls killed by a dog and to prosecute the owner of the dog supposed to have killed the fowls (Fred Ludwig)" and it was decided William B. Miller be allowed \$270 for seven cows that died or were killed after having been bitten by a mad dog.

According to minutes of that meeting, "It was left with Mr. [C.E.] Beach to look at drinking fountains when in New York and decide upon one to take the place of the present tank at the Center."

In another matter, James Livingston was appointed sexton of the cemeteries. The matter of raising the price paid him for digging a grave from \$4 to \$5 was determined to be out of the province of the selectmen.

### 100 years ago: 1917

Among the bills approved to be paid by selectmen and commissioners that January were \$69.70 to the Hartford Courant for advertising, \$76.88 to janitor et al J. Livingston, \$2,924.76 for three payrolls and \$0.75 to Royal Typewriter Co. for office supplies.

It was voted to accept Four Mile Road as a public highway for a distance of 285 feet south from Farmington Avenue.

Mrs. W.P. Barber Regant and seven other members of Sarah Whitman Hooker Chapter D.A.R. were present, prepared to turn over the Noah Webster Memorial Library

building to the town. The chapter would pay all bills except for the furnishing, which the town would fund.

It was voted to offer B.A. Griswold \$50 to settle a \$165 claim for damages to a motor car that ran into a stone pile on Farmington Avenue.

On January 12, a trustee for Wylls Lodge C.A. Griswold reported that the Lodge would allow the town joint use of the west portion of the lodge room for an office, provided a partition was built to separate it.

Fifteen property owners attended a public hearing January 26 to oppose the construction of two \$50,000 buildings of six apartments each proposed for Arnoldale Road. Mr. King noted that property along Farmington Avenue had depreciated 10 percent to 50 percent, "largely by reason of apartment buildings being erected" in the area. Action on the matter was deferred.

At a board of finance meeting January 24, a hearing was given to the cemetery committee for \$200 for the care of the Old and North Cemeteries. A \$62,485 request from the school board included \$37,175 for teachers salaries, \$1,650 for the superintendent's salary, \$4,600 for janitors, \$300 for a secretary's salary, \$3,000 each for supplies and repairs, \$350 for telephones, \$700 for furniture and \$200 for evening school.

### 75 years ago: 1942

At its January 12 meeting, the Town Council received a petition with more



Photos courtesy of the West Hartford Historical Society

**The Town Council received requests 75 years ago January to name the then-yet-to-be-completed field in the Charter Oak District after Lieutenant Gordon H. Sterling Jr. and after Arthur William Holcomb.**

than 300 signatures requesting the new recreation field in the Charter Oak District to be named The Arthur William Holcomb Memorial Field. American Legion Hayes-Velhage Post #96 requested the new recreation field be named The Lieutenant Gordon H. Sterling Jr. Recreational Field. J.W. Feldman, director of recreation, also requested the council to consider naming the field after Lt. Sterling.

At the same meeting, a letter was received from the West Hartford Chamber of Commerce asking the council to give serious consideration to establishing and equipping an emergency hospital. It was voted that the town manager require members of the Department of Safety to perform beyond their normal shift hours if needed and

to compensate them for extra duty. Proposals concerning blackouts and air raid protection were submitted by corporation counsel.

### 50 years ago: 1967

The Town Council appropriated \$25,000 to the West Hartford Fellowship Housing Inc., a non-stock corporation, to provide elderly rental housing on a nonprofit basis at its January 10 meeting.

On January 24 the council authorized bids to be accepted for a public works maintenance building that would give the department 22,950 square feet, with 8,400 square feet for the schools, and 4,100 square feet for the police and fire departments. Plans included five bays, a small office for the shop foreman, showers and locker rooms, a stock

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room and an assembly room. The mezzanine had space for the radio dispatcher's office, an office for the supervisor of streets and sewers, and one for his secretary, toilets and supply space. The basement, as requested by the police department, would be a nine-stall pistol range, a ready room to accommodate 30-40 men, a training classroom and two storage rooms.

### 25 years ago: 1992

On January 10, the council adopted new voting district boundaries per the State of Connecticut Reapportionment Committee, while on January 28 it voted to waive the bid process to allow the emergency repair of the gymnasium roof replacement at Bugbee School.

### 10 years ago: 2007

At its January 9 meeting, the council adopted a resolution to appoint a Public Art Task Force with six to 10 members; \$20,000 had been appropriated for its use in the town's budget. In addition, the town manager reported that the libraries would begin sending patrons email notices of overdue and potentially overdue books, and notices that

items on hold were ready for checking out. Mayor Scott Slifka also noted the ability to renew library books by phone.

### 5 years ago: 2012

At its January 10 meeting, following a public hearing, the council approved with some conditions a zoning designation allowing 12 new rental apartments to be constructed in the basement 1248-1260 Farmington Avenue, along with some other improvements. It also set up a Bike Task Force; discussed Complete Streets; and amended the budget to account for \$8,925,000 from FEMA for the costs of Winter Storm Alfred, with another \$2,975,000 coming from the fund balance.

### 1 year ago: 2016

The Town Council voted January 12 in favor of the application by Center Development Corporation for Arcadia Crossing for the 22-acre site owned by the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chambery. The \$100 million project would provide 310 apartments while allocating living space for the sisters. The council also voted to begin negotiations to purchase the University of Connecticut's West Hartford campus. **WHL**



Photos courtesy of the West Hartford Historical Society

In 1907, Charles Beach, who served on the Selectmen and Sewer Commission, was charged with deciding on a drinking fountain to replace the tank in the Center.

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# Writer's block

## Craft crisis

by Lynn Woike  
Editor



**T**he season of craft fairs has just wrapped up. I got to admire pottery, fibers, jewelry, cards, ornaments and candles. I found them inspiring. I wanted to make fairy houses; knit a pair of bright, colorful socks; print vintage-looking cards using some of my old photos; and throw the perfect mug and matching bowl glazed in blues and purples.

It is said that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. So is a little ability.

I am crafty enough to be able to do these things. I have the ability to knit, an eye for composing a photo and experience with making pottery. I just don't have an overabundance of talent. When I'm honest with myself, I know that if I ever did actually finish knitting both of the socks, they would not be a perfect pair. I know that the mugs I want to drink from require more talent than I exhibited decades ago.

I also don't have an overabundance of time. It takes time to make something from scratch, to gather materials, go through a multitude of steps – including that special field trip to get something you didn't know you'd need. Nothing dries fast enough, and then there's always the clean up.

For those reasons, I know I shouldn't flinch at the price of the queen-sized patchwork denim quilt or the garden sculpture. But I do, because there's a little voice in my head that says, "Why would you spend \$69 for that when all you need are a few bottle caps,

some bicycle gears and \$600 worth of welding equipment?"

I've made sweaters, quilts, scarves, hats and Halloween outfits. I've crafted candles, curtains, wreaths, cards and ornaments. I also made a lot of vases and planters; they were all my failed pieces of pottery.

I like turning some things into other things, making something that didn't before exist. Studies have found that creating art has positive effects; it enhances mental health and minimizes negative emotions – probably because it provides a distraction.

I wish you were reading this on paper I made myself.

I want to make driftwood wreaths, a hall tree from a vintage door and wind chimes from old silver utensils. I have collected my weight in beach glass that I have yet to turn into mermaids, jewelry, lampshades and mosaic scenes. I have a stack of magazines just waiting to have their pages torn into strips, rolled up tightly and glued to a canvas like the framed piece of art I saw hanging at a show.

I could do that. It's possible. It's possible I could also carve dragons out of marble and weave a blanket coat. Of course, it's much more possible I'll someday braid a rug and print Yule cards.

I wish I could make a fairy house for my granddaughter, a market bag for my sister, catnip toys for the man of my house and something with a lot of bling for my daughter – all in time for holiday giving.

There's something special about getting a handmade item. No one on my gift list

will have the pleasure this year.

Still, I am always yearning to create something artsy. Crafting is an addiction. It requires surrendering to a higher power not to be lured into the scrapbooking aisles at Michaels. Although I have lovingly caressed strings of beads at Sugarbeads, I have not bought any. It is, however, getting more difficult to ignore the 4,387 things you can do with mason jars. I mean who can resist Mod Podging them with maple leaves or turning them into chandeliers?

I craft, therefore I hoard. One summer not too long ago, I collected dozens of Scrabble games at tag sales with the intent of gluing inspirational words to trays to sit on desks and shelves or hang from hooks. I was also going to attach the trays like a chair rail along the two dining room walls to hold a favorite quote. That was before I saw the mismatched shutters painted beachy colors and arranged to cover an entire wall. That's why there's an odd assortment of old shutters in my basement ... next to the box of Scrabble tiles, which is next to the box of Scrabble trays. And how can I forget the collection of clear glass balls that I was going to fill with small natural objects to give as gifts for people to hang on their Christmas trees? I have forgotten why I collected the pinecones. The bolt of fabric reminds me about the drapes I never made. Right now I'd just like to hem the ones in the living room with something other than clothespins. **WHL**

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**KEITH TURLEY**, Publisher

## EDITORIAL

**Abigail Albair**, Executive Editor  
aalbair@turleyct.com

**Nancy Thompson**, Editor

**Kaitlin McCallum**, Assistant Editor

## STAFF WRITERS

**Alicia B. Smith**, **Allie Rivera**, **Mara Dresner**,  
**Sloan Brewster**, **David Heuschkel**

## ADVERTISING SALES

**Matt Winkler**

860-264-5653

matt@turleyct.com

## PAGE DESIGNERS

**Daniel Kornegay**, **Cynthia Martel**,  
**Robert Sirois**

## GRAPHICS DEPARTMENT

**Barbara Ouellette**, Production Manager  
ads@turleyct.com, 860-264-5523

**Maureen LaBier**, Production Assistant

**Daniel Kornegay**, **Corley Fleming**, **Cynthia Martel**,  
**Kathy Kokoszka**, **Mary Grimes**

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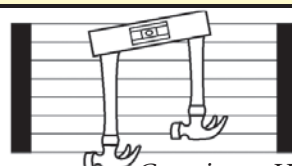
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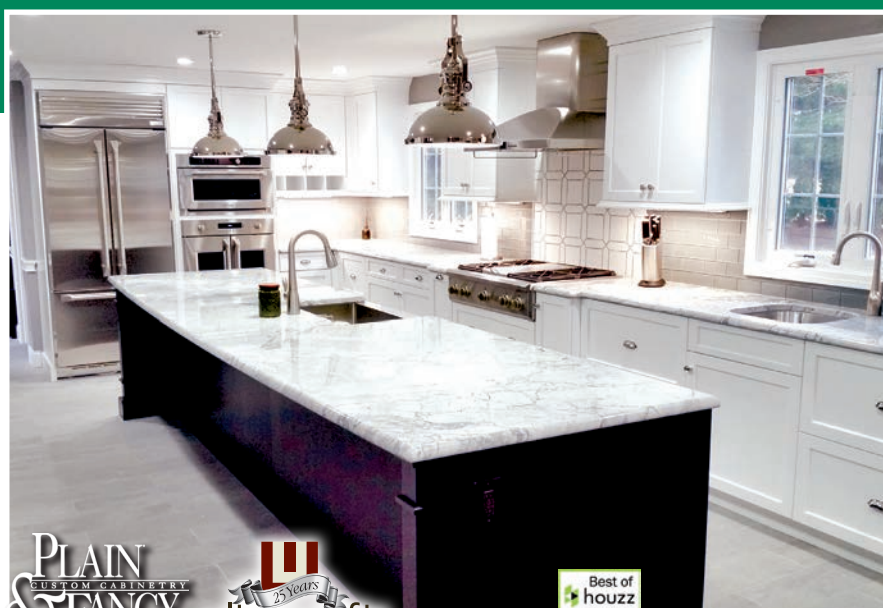


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BY MARK DIXON  
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]



## Ceiling Fans, Winter Use...

**T**ypically one thinks of using a ceiling fan in the warmer months, as it creates a wind 'chill' effect – making it feel cooler in your home. This happens when the blades are traveling in a counter-clockwise direction. By using a fan in this manner, it helps save energy and

money since you're able to raise the thermostat setting.

So clearly they are beneficial during the summer, but are you getting the most out of your ceiling fan during the winter months? Instead of letting them collect dust, put them to use!

Now regardless of season, warm air rises ... collecting near

the ceiling. So when paying to heat your home, why not get that warm air back down closer to where we live? For the best efficiency when it's cold outside, the blades should travel in a clockwise direction (stand beneath the fan or lie on your bed and look up to determine which way they are spinning). Making this change

re-circulates the warm air by creating an updraft, pushing it down the walls and back into the room at the same time. This happens without creating a cooling effect.

So if you don't have a ceiling fan, perhaps consider getting one... the energy savings can be significant, year-round. **WHL**

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